



2024

LIGHT READS,
GREAT
STORIES

A reading list curated for readers in adult literacy programs, ESL students and readers, and adult learners.

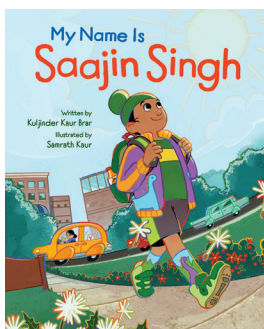
forest@accessola.com | forestofreading.com



Thank you to the *Light Reads, Great Stories* Selection Committee for their dedication to curating this list:
Myra Junyk, Sonia Doyon, Gail Kavelman, Lynella Reid-James

LIGHT READS, GREAT STORIES

Beginner Level Choices

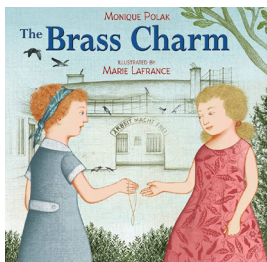


My Name is Saajin Singh

Written by Kuljinder Kaur Brar and Illustrated by Samrath Kaur

Published by Annick Press

Saajin loves his name—he loves it so much that he sees it spelled out in the world around him in his snacks, in the sky and sometimes he even sings it aloud. On his first day of school, Saajin is excited to meet his new classmates, but things take a turn when the teacher mispronounces his name as Say-jin and he is not sure how—or if he should—correct her. After trying to live with the different version of his name for a while and some thoughtful conversations with his family about the meaning behind it, Saajin realizes the importance of reclaiming his name and embracing his identity.



The Brass Charm

Written by Monique Polack and Illustrated by Marie Lafrance

Published by Scholastic Canada Ltd.

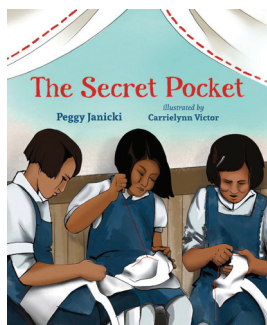
A young girl's grandmother gives her a brass charm, and passes along a story of hope and kindness during an unimaginable time.

Tali is staying at her Oma's apartment after a storm demolishes their house. She is upset at losing everything. "People have survived worse," says her mother — Oma survived World War II, and never speaks of it. But that night, Oma shares her story of Holocaust survival, the brass monkey charm that she was given in the camp, and a message of kindness and perseverance in the face of disaster.

This book includes an author's note, in which Monique Polak explains how it was inspired by her mother's true experience at Terezin, a Nazi concentration camp in what is now the Czech Republic.

LIGHT READS, GREAT STORIES

Beginner Level Choices



The Secret Pocket

Written by Peggy Janicki and Illustrated by Carrielynn Victor

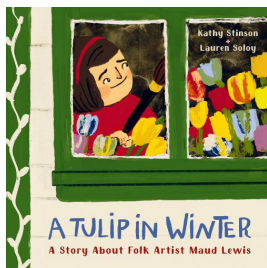
Published by Orca Book Publishers

"Captures the sympathy of readers and holds their attention...An age-appropriate telling by an Indigenous creative team of a tragic historical period."—*School Library Journal*, starred review

The true story of how Indigenous girls at a residential school sewed secret pockets into their dresses to hide food and survive.

Mary was four years old when she was first taken away to the Lejac Indian Residential School. It was far away from her home and family. Always hungry and cold, there was little comfort for young Mary. Speaking Dakelh was forbidden and the nuns and priest were always watching, ready to punish. Mary and the other girls had a genius idea: drawing on the knowledge from their mothers, aunts and grandmothers who were all master sewers, the girls would sew hidden pockets in their clothes to hide food. They secretly gathered materials and sewed at nighttime, then used their pockets to hide apples, carrots and pieces of bread to share with the younger girls.

Based on the author's mother's experience at residential school, *The Secret Pocket* is a story of survival and resilience in the face of genocide and cruelty. But it's also a celebration of quiet resistance to the injustice of residential schools and how the sewing skills passed down through generations of Indigenous women gave these girls a future, stitch by stitch.



Tulip in Winter: A Story About Folk Artist Maud Lewis

Written by Kathy Stinson and Illustrated by Lauren Soloy

Published by Greystone Books

A celebration of a beloved folk artist, and her artistic expression of joy and beauty.

Known for her vibrant and cheerful paintings of landscapes, plants, and animals, Maud Lewis' iconic folk art is celebrated around the world. Despite her beautiful art, she spent much of her life living in poverty with rheumatoid arthritis. In this stunning picture book, author Kathy Stinson and illustrator Lauren Soloy bring Maud's world to life: how she captured in her art what she loved most, while navigating the mobility issues caused by her condition. From bright paintings of the sea and countryside, to the flowers and birds she painted on the walls of the small house she shared with her husband, Maud's work continues to delight and inspire viewers young and old.

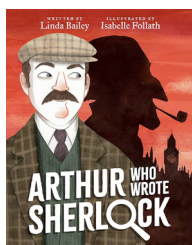
A Tulip in Winter features:

- Backmatter about Maud Lewis' life and legacy
- Notes from the author and illustrator about how Maud has impacted their lives

Uplifting and visually compelling, Maud's story will inspire young readers to find and focus on the beauty in their worlds.

LIGHT READS, GREAT STORIES

Intermediate Level Choices

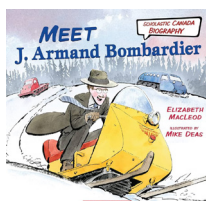


Arthur Who Wrote Sherlock

Written by Linda Bailey and Illustrated by Isabelle Follath

Published by Tundra

What if you wrote a story about a detective, and he became the most famous detective ever? Wouldn't that be wonderful? Or . . . would it? Arthur has always loved stories. Even as he grew up poor, endured hardships at school and experienced danger on the high seas, Arthur was always thrilled and inspired by stories. Eventually, he writes his own, and after many years of struggle as a writer, he finally finds success with a series of mystery stories starring his genius detective, Sherlock Holmes. But is it possible for a character to become *too* successful? *Too* popular? And if that happens to Arthur, will he really throw his greatest literary creation . . . over a cliff?!



Meet J. Armand Bombardier

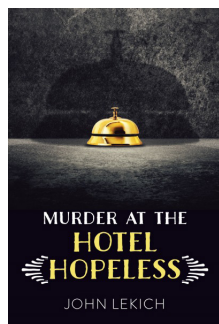
Written by Elizabeth MacLeod and Illustrated by Mike Deas

Published by Scholastic Canada Ltd.

Meet Joseph-Armand Bombardier — Canadian inventor, innovator and entrepreneur! Born in 1907, Joseph-Armand grew up in Valcourt, a small village in Quebec. Like many places in rural and Northern Canada, it was often cut off from the world after winter snows made the roads impassable. When Armand was a kid, he was already inventing his own toys, including his first attempt at a vehicle that could drive through snow. As an adult, the passion to invent a snow machine became a serious ambition after his 2-year-old son died from appendicitis. It was winter and they could not get him to the hospital.

Armand persisted even after many failures — until he did it! His B7 snow machine was used to deliver milk and mail . . . and it saved lives. But Armand didn't stop there! He continued to invent and innovate his whole life, making contributions to the war effort and developing machines like the Muskeg tractor and the famous Ski-doo. His inventions revolutionized the way people live and work.

The award-winning Scholastic Canada Biography series highlights the lives of remarkable Canadians whose achievements have inspired and changed the lives of those who followed.



Murder at the Hotel Hopeless

Written by John Lekich

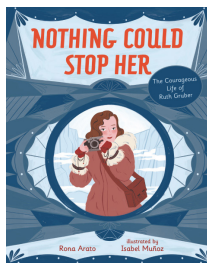
Published by Orca Book Publishers

Charlie Hope was not expecting to spend his summer trying to solve a murder.

Helping his mother run the family hotel doesn't usually offer much excitement. The only other people around are Penny Price, a spoiled child actor and star of the hit TV series *Little Miss Murder* being shot in town, and Mr. Ignato, an elderly resident at the hotel. When Mr. Ignato dies from a fall down the stairs, Charlie suspects foul play. Nobody believes him except for Penny, who jumps at the chance to solve a real murder. The two of them discover that Mr. Ignato was once a famous international jewel thief who stole a million-dollar diamond that was never recovered. Is Mr. Ignato's criminal past related to his untimely death? And can Charlie and Penny prove that it wasn't an accident?

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Intermediate Level Choices

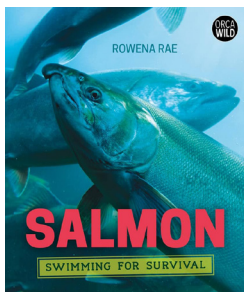


Nothing Could Stop Her: The Courageous Life of Ruth Gruber

Written by Rona Arato and Illustrated by Isabel Muñoz

Published by Lerner Publishing Group

Ruth Gruber didn't want to live an ordinary life, and she wouldn't take "no" for an answer. Born to a Jewish American family in 1911, she grew up to become a renowned journalist and activist. Her career spanned seven decades and led her to places that other reporters wouldn't or couldn't go, from Nazi Germany to the remote Arctic regions of the Soviet Union. At a time when women were expected to stay at home and raise families, Ruth told the stories of people in need and fought for their rights to live in safety and freedom.



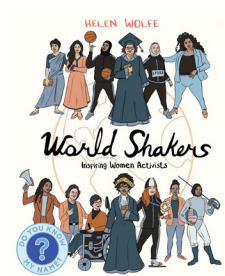
Salmon: Swimming for Survival

Written by Rowena Rae

Published by Orca Book Publishers

Salmon: Swimming for Survival introduces us to the dramatic life story of salmon.

These fish hatch in streams, swim extreme distances out to sea, and then migrate home to where they were born to produce the next generation. But today their habitats and very survival are threatened by human activity. This book looks at the unique biology of salmon, their importance to many Indigenous communities, their cultural and economic impact and the vital role they play in ecosystems. With profiles from scientists, educators, fishers and more, learn about the people who are working hard to change the uncertain future of salmon and improve the chance that these iconic fish can survive for generations to come.



World Shakers: Inspiring Women Activists

Written by Helen Wolfe

Published by Second Story Press

What does it take to change the world?

What does it take to change the world? Whether it was the rule that forced Muslim women athletes like Ibtiyah Muhammad to choose between competition and wearing hijab or Indigenous women like Mary Two-Axe Earley to lose their official Indigenous status when they married white men, these women fought against it. Sometimes, they used their voice, like disability rights activist Judy Heumann, and Alicia Garza, the co-founder of Black Lives Matter. Sometimes, they led by example, like the STEM-loving Afghan Dreamers. All of them had the courage to shake the world and make a path for other women to follow.

LIGHT READS, GREAT STORIES

Advanced Level Choices



Akim Aliu: Dreamer

Written by Akim Aliu and Greg Anderson Elysée and Illustrated by Marcus Williams

Published by Scholastic Canada Ltd.

This honest, engrossing graphic memoir tells the story of professional athlete and activist Akim Aliu's incredible life as a hockey prodigy in Canada.

Akim Aliu — also known as “Dreamer” — is a Ukrainian–Nigerian–Canadian professional hockey player whose career took him all around the world and who experienced systemic racism at every turn. Dreamer tells Akim's incredible story, from being the only Black child in his Ukrainian community, to his family struggling to make ends meet while living in Toronto, to confronting the racist violence he often experienced both on and off the ice. This is a gut-wrenching and riveting graphic novel memoir that reminds us to never stop dreaming, and is sure to inspire young readers everywhere.



Batter Royale

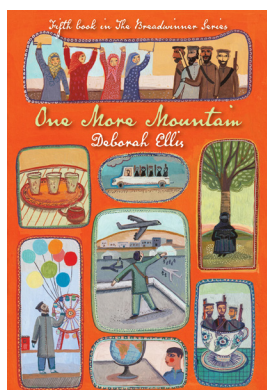
Written by Leisl Adams

Published by Amulet Paperbacks

In Leisl Adams's fun debut graphic novel, *Batter Royale*, a talented young chef is selected to participate in a baking reality show and finds herself mixed up in spicy competition, bitter rivalry, and sweet romance.

When 17-year-old small-town waitress Rose impresses a famous food critic, she and her best friend, Fred, find themselves thrust into the tough world of competitive baking. The contest is an intense 10 days of bizarre challenges, and the competition is cutthroat. Some competitors are willing to lie, cheat, and sabotage their way to the top. Rose may be in over her head, but she is determined to show that she can become a top chef.

Batter Royale is a fish-out-of-water-style romantic comedy about climbing out of the circumstances you're in and making your dreams come true.



One More Mountain

Written by Deborah Ellis

Published by Groundwood Books Ltd.

It's 2021, and the Taliban have regained power in Afghanistan. Parvana and Shauzia, the brave protagonists of *The Breadwinner*, must now flee to escape new dangers from an old enemy.

In Kabul, 15-year-old Damsa runs away to avoid being forced into marriage by her family. She is found by a police officer named Shauzia, who takes her to Green Valley, a shelter and school for women and girls run by Parvana.

It has been 20 years since Parvana and Shauzia had to disguise themselves as boys to support themselves and their families. But when the Taliban were defeated in 2001, it looked as if Afghans could finally rebuild their country. Many things have changed for Parvana since then. She has married Asif, who she met in the desert as she searched for her family when she was a child. She runs a school for girls. She has a son, Rafi, who is about to fly to New York, where he will train to become a dancer.

But Shauzia is still Parvana's best friend. And Parvana is still headstrong, bringing her in conflict with her spoiled sister Maryam. While Asif tries to get Maryam and Rafi on one of the last flights out of Kabul, the Taliban come to the school, and Parvana must lead the girls out of Green Valley and into the mountains.

LIGHT READS, GREAT STORIES

Advanced Level Choices



Unsinkable Lucile: How a Farm Girl Became the Queen of Fashion and Survived the Titanic

Written by Hugh Brewster and Illustrated by Laurie McGaw

Published by Firefly Books

Before Chanel there was Lucile.

She was one of the world's most glamorous women and the most famous fashionista of the Edwardian age. Yet, couturiere Lucile, Lady Duff Gordon was born as just plain Lucy Sutherland and grew up in a stone farmhouse in Ontario, Canada. How she went from a backwoods farm to presiding over an international fashion empire is a remarkable story of unshakeable determination and female achievement at a time when it was thought that a woman's place was in the home.

Unsinkable Lucile is a lavishly illustrated story of Lucile's lively childhood, her rise to the top of the fashion world and her survival of the *Titanic* disaster and its aftermath, during which she was unjustly vilified. Time and time again, she proved that nothing could sink her spirits or stop her drive to innovate and create.

Among Lucile's many innovations were the first fashion shows, the first fashion models and the Edwardian craze for oversized hats. She also helped free women from the corset and coined the word "chic." Lucile was also a fashion adviser to millions and the creator of clothes seen in over 115 movies.

Replete with historical photos and beautiful paintings by award-winning illustrator Laurie McGaw, *Unsinkable Lucile* is a humorous, touching and empowering tale of a woman who beat the odds, never backed down and changed the world of fashion forever.



Winterkill

Written by Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch

Published by Scholastic Canada Ltd.

FOOD IS RUNNING OUT . . . AND THE ENEMY IS CLOSING IN.

Nyl is just trying to stay alive. Ever since the Soviet dictator, Stalin, started to take control of the farms in Ukraine like the one Nyl's family lives on, there is less and less food to go around. On top of bad harvests and a harsh winter, conditions worsen until it's clear the lack of food is not just chance . . . but a murderous plan leading all the way to Stalin.

Alice has recently arrived from Canada with her father, who is here to work for the Soviets . . . until they realize that the people suffering the most are all ethnically Ukrainian like Nyl. Something is very wrong, and Alice is determined to help.

Desperate, Nyl and Alice come up with an audacious plan that could save both of them — and their community. But can they survive long enough to succeed?

Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch brings to vivid life the Holodomor, or death by starvation, Ukraine's famine-genocide of the 1930s. Tragically timely and resonant, this is a story about unity, perseverance, and the irrepressible hunger to survive.